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ON PAGE A1

WASHINGTON TIMES
7 August 1984

Attorney general ties KGB to Olympics dirty tricks

By David Sellers
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

CHICAGO — Letters believed to be sent by the Ku Klux Klan threatening action against 20 Asian and African countries if they participated in the Olympics were actually the work of the Soviet KGB, Attorney General William French Smith charged yesterday.

Delivering the opening assembly address at the American Bar Association annual meeting, Mr. Smith cited several examples of what he claimed were violations of the "international rule of law."

"Today, the greatest threat to the international rule of law arises from the communist world and the means it utilizes to foster the spread of communism," he said.

Mr. Smith said he was especially concerned by reports that the Ku Klux Klan had allegedly mailed abusive letters to Asian and African countries planning to take part in the Olympics currently in progress in Los Angeles. The letters, which Mr. Smith described as "openly racist and disgusting," were actually the work of the KGB, he claimed.

"They were ... manufactured and mailed by another organization devoted to terror: the KGB," he told the lawyers.

At least one letter that purportedly had been mailed by the Klan in Maryland was received in South Korea, the attorney general said.

"Although I cannot detail all of what we know about these documents for fear of helping the authors to refine their techniques, a thorough analysis — including linguistic and forensic techniques — reveals that they are classic examples of a Soviet forgery or disinformation operation. They were apparently intended to aid the Soviets in justifying their boycott of the Olympics and to gain the support of non-communist-bloc countries," Mr. Smith said.

"Through this plot, the Soviet Union, employing cynical falsehood, struck at both the Olympic ideal and the rule of law."

After his address, Mr. Smith declined to detail any steps the State Department may take to deal with the "disinformation," but when questioned about the Justice Department, he said, "We'll do anything we think appropriate."

None of the countries that received the threatening letters stayed away from the Olympics, he said.

Mr. Smith's remarks came just minutes after ABA President Wallace D. Riley praised the progress made in the current meeting — which for the first time has included participants from 28 countries — and a day after Chief Justice Warren Burger said that he looked forward to the day when American law firms would be able to have branch offices in Moscow and Warsaw.

In his strongly anti-Soviet speech Mr. Smith said that progress in international relations was being impeded by different interpretations of the rule of law.

"Although it remains the conceptual cornerstone of many democratic nations, the rule of law remains at best a dim aspiration throughout much of the world," Mr. Smith said. "Many countries do not follow the rule of law. Many governments do not even wish to follow the rule of law — except as a propaganda device to criticize democratic nations for alleged deficiencies."

In order to advance their causes, Mr. Smith claimed that communist countries have not only intentionally spread misleading information, but also have organized and endorsed drug trafficking efforts.

Specifically, Mr. Smith charged that Cuba and Bulgaria have used drug trafficking to assist terrorists, and referred to recent evidence revealing that the Nicaraguan government may be using drug trade to help finance its revolutionary efforts.

"The damage done in this country by trafficking in drugs is well known in the ruined lives of drug users, the tremendous illicit and untaxed profits generated for criminals, and the violence spawned by users and traffickers," Mr. Smith said. "Any coming together of terrorist or insurgent groups and drug trafficking must

be viewed as an extremely serious threat to law and society."

He described both disinformation and drug trafficking as serious threats to the international rule of law.

"Disinformation strikes at the ability to communicate the truth, which is the raw material of democratic and peaceful decision-making," Mr. Smith said. "International drug trafficking by communist states or revolutionary groups threatens the rule of law even more directly. Indeed, in a world in which terrorist incidents increased six-fold during the 1970s, the possibility of terrorist groups financing their violence through drug-trafficking is especially heinous."